



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries and State Partners Request Help from Fishermen to Collect Information on South Atlantic Red Snapper During the 2012 Season

NOAA Fisheries and state partners from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida are preparing for the 2012 South Atlantic red snapper commercial and recreational seasons. These agencies are looking to fishermen for help with red snapper data collection during the openings. Data collected will provide much needed information for the 2014 red snapper population assessment. Data collection is scheduled to happen in a number of ways and at a number of locations throughout each state. A summary of data collection efforts is provided below, and more details are available on the following NOAA Fisheries Web page:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/2012SARedSnapperSeason.htm>

How to Contribute to the Data Collection Process

Carcass drop off locations

The states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina will have freezers on docks, at marinas, and at bait shops that recreational anglers can use to drop off fish carcasses. Some sites will have catch cards to go along with the fish carcass in a carcass bag. The catch cards are intended to provide data and information about a fisherman's trip, such as date and length of trip. State biologists will collect the frozen carcasses. They will measure the length of the carcass and remove the otoliths (ear bones) to determine the fish's age.

Online surveys

Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina are providing private anglers an opportunity to contribute catch and fishing effort information during the seasons through on-line surveys. The online surveys will be used to collect basic information about an angler's fishing

trip, including date, length, and location of a fishing trip, as well as the number and size of fish landed and/or released.

Dockside Sampling

Each state will conduct recreational and commercial sampling dockside to collect catch and fishing effort information, as well as biological data (i.e., length of fish caught, fish ear bones for determining the age of the fish, etc.). Fishermen are encouraged to participate in dockside surveys and allow state and federal fishery biologists to collect biological data from their catch.

Charter and Headboat Logbooks

Charter for-hire vessel captains in South Carolina and headboat captains from North Carolina through Florida are currently required to submit logbooks summarizing catch and effort information from each fishing trip. Captains are encouraged to report logbooks in a timely fashion following the red snapper seasons to allow NOAA Fisheries and its state partners to determine the amount of fish caught.

Charter Telephone Surveys

Charter vessel operators in Georgia and along the Atlantic coast of Florida will be contacted by phone after the recreational red snapper season to collect information on red snapper catch and fishing trips taken during the 2012 season.

Commercial Quota Monitoring

NOAA Fisheries will monitor the commercial red snapper quota through dealer reports. Federally permitted dealers must report red snapper purchases every two weeks. For the 2012 season, it is particularly important that red snapper purchases be reported by dealers in a timely manner as NOAA Fisheries will not be able to determine

if the commercial season can re-open until all red snapper purchases are reported for the September season.

How This Information Will Be Used

Information collected will be used to estimate landings and fishing effort during the season. Biological samples will be used to determine the age, size, and growth of red snapper in the population. All information collected will be made available for the 2014 red snapper population assessment. Population assessment participants, which include fishermen, state and federal fishery biologists, academics, and other entities, will determine the applicability of the information for assessing the status of the population.

Details of the Season

The **commercial** red snapper season opens at 12:01 a.m., local time, on September 17, 2012, and closes at 12:01 a.m., local time, on September 24, 2012. During the open commercial season, the trip limit is 50 pounds gutted weight and there is no minimum size limit for red snapper.

The **recreational** fishing season will open for two consecutive weekends made up of Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The recreational red snapper season opens at 12:01 a.m., local time, on September 14, 2012, and closes at 12:01 a.m.,

local time, on September 17, 2012; the season then reopens at 12:01 a.m., local time, on September 21, 2012, and closes at 12:01 a.m., local time, on September 24, 2012. During the open recreational season, the bag limit is one fish per person per day and there is no minimum size limit for red snapper.

How You Can Help Reduce Discard Mortality

Many saltwater fish, such as red snapper, suffer from “barotrauma” following release back into the water. Barotrauma is a build-up of swim bladder gases that makes it difficult or impossible for them to go back down. The key to improving the survival of these released fishes is to return them to the depth from which they are caught as quickly as possible. A variety of recompression tools are on the market, including descender devices, release weights, release baskets, and others. For other tips and tactics, check out:

<http://catchandrelease.org/redsnapper.shtml>. Through a program called FishSmart, anglers and NOAA are looking for ways to make sure more of those released fish survive. Learn more at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2012/04/04_11_12fishsmart_workshops.html. Through careful fishing and use of proper release techniques, millions of fish released today can survive to improve the health of fisheries.

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